

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF:

SUPPORT - SB 184: AN ACT EXTENDING THROUGH NOVEMBER 8, 2022, SEVERAL CHANGES REGARDING ELECTION ADMINISTRATION AS A RESULT OF COVID-19 AND CONCERNING ELIGIBILITY TO VOTE BY ABSENTEE BALLOT.

SUPPORT - HB 5262: AN ACT REVISING CERTAIN ABSENTEE VOTING ELIGIBILITY STATUTES.

March 4, 2022 - Public Hearing 10am

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Flexer and Rep. Fox, and Distinguished Members of the GAE Committee,

My name is Paula Bacolini, I am a CT resident for over 35 years, a senior citizen and a retired CT educator. I am the founder and leader of Make Voting Easy-CT, a grassroots organization with nearly 1,000 members from 95 cities and towns across CT, who are devoted to making voting more convenient and accessible.

I am writing in SUPPORT of both bills: SB 184 and HB 5262:

S.B. 184:

This bill allows COVID to be a valid reason for registered voters to use absentee ballots for the 2022 Primaries and the General Election on November 8, 2022. Since 2020, the coronavirus has mutated with new more dangerous and infectious variants being identified here in CT and across the globe.

CT has just come out of a period of more than a 20% infection rate due to the Omicron variant of the coronavirus. As of today, CT has only fully vaccinated 78% of the population and only 75% in Hartford County. This is NOT herd immunity, and therefore, we are still taking risks from this global pandemic.

Since we do not know what variants may be present with an increase of infection rates in the fall, we should not have to choose between contracting COVID 19, a severe illness with lasting consequences even death, and exercising our constitutional right to vote and participate in our democracy.

As a senior citizen, I personally appreciated the work of this committee and the CT General Assembly when you gave us the opportunity to choose to vote by absentee ballot due to covid in 2020 and 2021. Please make sure that this option is available to all eligible voters again this year in 2022.

H.B. 5262:

This bill aligns the language in our current state statutes to conform with the language in our state constitution. The current statute is more restrictive than the actual state constitution.

By aligning the language, this bill will expand the eligibility to vote by absentee ballot and include:

Illness and disability in general, so that caretakers of relatives and those who must be out of their towns for work during voting hours may apply for and obtain an absentee ballot.

This bill addresses the many challenges that all registered voters face in their daily lives balancing work, family obligations, and their ability to have easy access to the polls on Election Day. Our democracy depends on this.

I urge you to vote YES and support these two important pieces of legislation: SB 184 and HB 5262.

Thank you for your hard work for the people of CT. Please stay safe and well.

Respectfully,
Paula Bacolini
Glastonbury, CT
Founder and Leader
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